Wednesday 12 September 2018

P8_TA(2018)0341

Autonomous weapon systems

European Parliament resolution of 12 September 2018 on autonomous weapon systems (2018/2752(RSP))

(2019/C 433/10)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Title V, Articles 21 and 21(2)(c) of the Treaty on European Union,

— having regard to the 'Martens clause' included in Protocol 1 of 1977 additional to the Geneva Conventions,

— having regard to Part IV of the UN 2018 Agenda for Disarmament, entitled 'Securing Our Common Future',

— having regard to its study of 3 May 2013 on the human rights implications of the usage of drones and unmanned robots in warfare,

— having regard to its various positions, recommendations and resolutions calling for an international ban on lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS), such as its recommendation to the Council of 5 July 2018 on the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly ([1]), the mandate to start negotiations adopted in plenary on 13 March 2018 with a view to the adoption of a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, its resolution of 13 December 2017 on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2016 and the European Union's policy on the matter ([2]), its recommendation to the Council of 7 July 2016 on the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly ([3]), and its resolution of 27 February 2014 on armed drones ([4]),

— having regard to the annual report of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns, of 9 April 2013 (A/HRC/23/47),

— having regard to the EU statements on lethal autonomous weapons systems made to the Group of Governmental Experts of the parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in Geneva, at its meetings of 13-17 November 2017, 9-13 April 2018 and 27-31 August 2018,

— having regard to the contributions made by different states, including EU Member States, prior to the 2017 and 2018 meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts,

— having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 31 May 2017 calling for a human-in-command approach to artificial intelligence and a ban on lethal autonomous weapon systems,

— having regard to the call by the Holy See for a ban on lethal autonomous weapons,

— having regard to the open letter of July 2015 signed by over 3 000 artificial intelligence and robotics researchers and that of 21 August 2017 signed by 116 founders of leading robotics and artificial intelligence companies warning about lethal autonomous weapon systems, and the letter by 240 tech organisations and 3 089 individuals pledging never to develop, produce or use lethal autonomous weapon systems,

([1]) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0312.
([2]) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0494.
([3]) OJ C 101, 16.3.2018, p. 166.
([4]) OJ C 285, 29.8.2017, p. 110.

— having regard to the statements by the International Committee of the Red Cross and to civil society initiatives such as the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, which represents 70 organisations in 30 countries, including Human Rights Watch, Article 36, PAX and Amnesty International,

— having regard to Rule 123(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas EU policies and actions are guided by the principles of human rights and respect for human dignity, the principles of the UN Charter and international law; whereas these principles should be applied in order to preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security;

B. whereas the term 'lethal autonomous weapon systems' refers to weapon systems without meaningful human control over the critical functions of selecting and attacking individual targets;

C. whereas an unknown number of countries, publicly funded industries and private industries are reportedly researching and developing lethal autonomous weapon systems, ranging all the way from missiles capable of selective targeting to learning machines with cognitive skills to decide whom, when and where to fight;

D. whereas non-autonomous systems such as automated, remotely operated and tele-operated systems should not be considered as lethal autonomous weapons systems;

E. whereas lethal autonomous weapon systems have the potential to fundamentally change warfare by prompting an unprecedented and uncontrolled arms race;

F. whereas the use of lethal autonomous weapon systems raises fundamental ethical and legal questions of human control, in particular with regard to critical functions such as target selection and engagement; whereas machines and robots cannot make human-like decisions involving the legal principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution;

G. whereas human involvement and oversight are central to the lethal decision-making process, since it is humans who remain accountable for decisions concerning life and death;

H. whereas international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, fully applies to all weapon systems and their operators, and whereas compliance with international law is a key requirement that states must fulfil, particularly when it comes to upholding principles such as protecting the civilian population or taking precautions in attack;

I. whereas the use of lethal autonomous weapon systems raises key questions about the implementation of international human rights law, international humanitarian law and European norms and values with regard to future military actions;

J. whereas in August 2017, 116 founders of leading international robotics and artificial intelligence companies sent an open letter to the UN calling on governments to 'prevent an arms race in these weapons' and 'to avoid the destabilising effects of these technologies';

K. whereas any given lethal autonomous weapon system could malfunction on account of badly written code or a cyber-attack perpetrated by an enemy state or a non-state actor;

L. whereas Parliament has repeatedly called for the urgent development and adoption of a common position on lethal autonomous weapon systems, for an international ban on the development, production and use of lethal autonomous weapon systems enabling strikes to be carried out without meaningful human control, and for a start to effective negotiations for their prohibition;

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1. Recalls the ambition of the EU to be a global actor for peace, and calls for the expansion of its role in global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, and for its actions and policies to strive for the maintenance of international peace and security, ensuring respect for international humanitarian and human rights law and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure;

2. Calls on the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), the Member States and the European Council to develop and adopt, as a matter of urgency and prior to the November 2018 meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, a common position on lethal autonomous weapon systems that ensures meaningful human control over the critical functions of weapon systems, including during deployment, and to speak in relevant forums with one voice and act accordingly; calls, in this context, on the VP/HR, the Member States and the Council to share best practices and garner input from experts, academics and civil society;

3. Urges the VP/HR, the Member States and the Council to work towards the start of international negotiations on a legally binding instrument prohibiting lethal autonomous weapon systems;

4. Stresses, in this light, the fundamental importance of preventing the development and production of any lethal autonomous weapon system lacking human control in critical functions such as target selection and engagement;

5. Recalls its position of 13 March 2018 on the Regulation on the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, in particular paragraph 4 of Article 6 (eligible actions), and underlines its willingness to adopt a similar position in the context of the upcoming defence research programme, the defence industrial development programme and other relevant features of the post-2020 European Defence Fund;

6. Underlines the fact that none of the weapons or weapon systems currently operated by EU forces are lethal autonomous weapon systems; recalls that weapons and weapon systems specifically designed to defend own platforms, forces and populations against highly dynamic threats such as hostile missiles, munitions and aircraft are not considered lethal autonomous weapon systems; emphasises that engagement decisions against human-inhabited aircraft should be taken by human operators;

7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the United Nations and the Secretary-General of NATO.